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THE CITIZEN

PRIZES.

A painter friend took the Citizen to an exhibition the other day, and was good enough to go the rounds with him, pointing out works by special celebrities, explaining certain merits and shortcomings none too obvious to the untrained observer. Finally halting before an uncommonly dull canvas, which the Citizen would doubtless have passed with only a glance, he said, with a wave of his hand, "This is the picture to which the John Black prize was awarded." "For what?" the Citizen asked, guilelessly. "For being the best picture in the exhibition," he was told. He then put on his glasses. What he saw need not be described, but it greatly increased his wonder, and thereupon he began asking questions. "Who gave the prize, or rather who made the selection? A jury of artists, indeed, and do you mean to say, my dear fellow, that this picture is better than—your own, for instance, which I just noticed in the adjoining gallery? Oh, you were not in the competition, you say, neither was Tom Smith, nor Will Jones, all of you having received the honor in past seasons, but how is the public to know this? Your names are marked with a little star in the catalogue. I see, but how many persons are going to read that little footnote? You admit that it is unfair and yet you aid and abet the practice; you say that prizes help on an exhibition, that they lend interest both on the part of the artist and of the crowd."

Returning home the Citizen fell to cogitating. Obviously the present system is unjust and misleading, but how remedy it when the sufferers are completely satisfied? Prizes mean competition, competition stimulates effort, therefore why not have prizes? But, on the other hand, why not bestow them more circumspectly? When the public is told that a certain picture has been adjudged the best in an exhibition by a jury of well-known artists, it must either accept the judgment or discredit the jury. But think what an impossible task is set the

jurors! How often is there a best picture in any exhibition much less in all? As well try to multiply apples by oranges as to compare a landscape, a portrait, a figure and a still-life painting in this manner. Or at least it seems so to the Citizen. To be sure, as his friend explained, a good many are eliminated from the contest, but under these conditions wherein is the honor of the award? Surely it is not difficult to be head of a class of two. Fortunately, however, there seem to be more than enough prizes to go around, and, hit or miss, they are apparently pretty sure to come one's way if one is a persistent exhibitor. Looking over a directory of artists the Citizen found scarce one, of more than provincial reputation, who had not thus been honored. He confesses the mention did look well after the name, and he has no doubt that in this titleless country many artists are ranked in accordance therewith. Of course, why then surrender the badge of distinction? And what is more, a dealer has confided to the Citizen that frames bearing an announcement of award give salable quality to the picture they inclose—that whether or not juries are infallible their dictum is given commercial rating. Apparently, then, the whole trouble lies in unjust valuation both of honors and merit—the necessity of creating an interest external and literally unrelated to the subject considered. Perhaps it is unpreventable, perhaps it will remedy itself, perhaps the Citizen, being a layman—one of the uninitiated—is altogether on the wrong track, but to him the whole thing does seem a bit impractical and a trifle droll.

ERRATA.

Through mischance and oversight, several errors were unfortunately made in printing a sonnet, "Guido's Aurora," by Mr. George Worthington, in the March issue of ART AND PROGRESS. In some unaccountable way the final "e" was dropped from borne, distorting its meaning; "dawn" was substituted for "lawn" at the loss of a simile, and "ye" appeared as "you" in the last sentence. Apology is made to the author.—THE EDITOR.